

AETC News Clips



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20, 21 + 22 Oct 01

Express-News: Military

Randolph general given top command

By Sig Christenson

Express-News Military Writer

Web Posted : 10/22/2001 12:00 AM

Gen. Hal M. Hornburg, head of the Air Education and Training Command at Randolph AFB, has been chosen to lead the Air Force's Combat Command.

President Bush last week tapped Hornburg to serve as the chief of the Langley, Va.-based Air Combat Command, which is providing many of the forces that have been deployed to Afghanistan.

While the Senate likely will confirm Bush's nomination, it wasn't immediately clear when Hornburg could take his new post.

"Because the post at Langley is vacant, it could be fairly soon," AETC spokesman Dave Smith said.

Hornburg has commanded AETC since June 2000, replacing Gen. Lloyd W. "Fig" Newton, the first African American to serve as a pilot in the Thunderbirds precision flight team and one of seven black four-star generals in U.S. history.

In the 16 months he has been at AETC, Hornburg established a reputation as a commander who looked out for his enlisted troops.

Not long after taking over, he was shocked to find airmen living in a 200-room Lackland AFB dorm that suffered from peeling paint, rusting doors and holes in the walls. Some of the dorm's rooms were so run-down they had not been used for years.

Then-Lackland commander Maj. Gen. Michael N. Farage ordered the dorm closed and the troops moved to off-base housing, a decision Hornburg supported.

"How could I ask any mother or father to send me their son or daughter and have them live like that?" he told the San Antonio Express-News earlier this year.

A fighter pilot, Hornburg came to San Antonio from the combat command, where he served as vice commander from January to June

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2000. He will succeed Gen. John P. Jumper, who left the combat command in September to become the Air Force's 17th chief of staff.

The Air Education and Training Command recruits, trains and educates 200,000 airmen each year at 13 installations. One base, Lackland AFB, graduates about 34,000 enlistees annually, while Randolph is home to instructor pilot and navigator training.

The Air Combat Command operates Air Force bombers, fighters and attack aircraft based in the United States. The command acts as the primary provider of air combat forces to the war fighting commands. Its 160,000-plus officers, enlistees and civilians are assigned to bases across the United States.

sigc@express-news.net

10/22/2001

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Express-News: Military

Houston port placed under heavy protection

By Sig Christenson

Express-News Military Writer

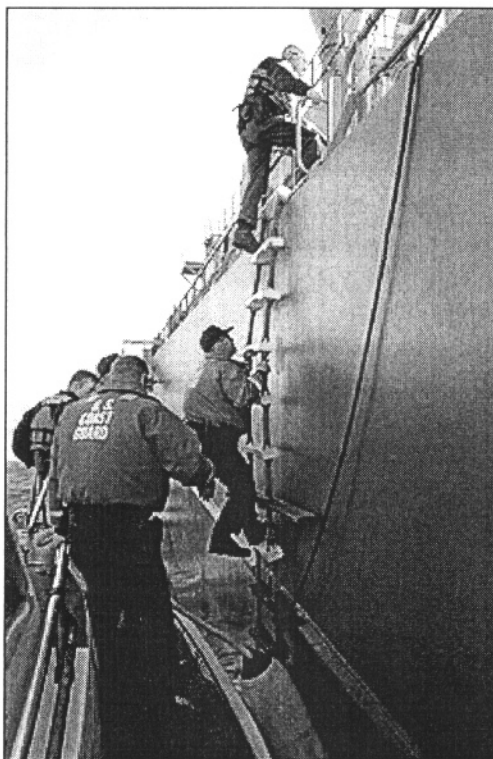
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OFF THE BOLIVAR PENINSULA — As their Coast Guard utility boat bobs on the choppy sea, Petty Officer John Bafia and five other men carrying 9 mm handguns time their jumps onto another ship filled with highly flammable liquefied petroleum gas.

The Chemtrans Christian, anchored just offshore in the Gulf of Mexico, is the site for this latest round in "High-Interest Vessel" boarding — a procedure instituted in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks that have put the Coast Guard on its highest state of alert since World War II, keeping an eye on more than 360 ports and 95,000 miles of U.S. shoreline.

An unprecedented flurry of safety measures, including the escorting of cruise ships in and out of some ports, have been implemented in recent weeks by the Coast Guard.

"I think right now people in America are seeing the Coast Guard in a different light than they saw us before," said Petty Officer Brian Day, 24, of La Marque. "I think not all, but a good majority, of the civilian population have the idea that the Coast Guard is the TV show 'Baywatch,' and a lot of all we do is search and rescue."



The Coast Guard, responsible for watching 360 ports, boards a GasChem ship for inspection. Below, Ronald Dearmin (left) of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Paul Keough of the Coast Guard watch the channel while on patrol.

Photos by Kevin Geil/Express-News

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The Coast Guard has long boarded vessels for safety and law enforcement purposes, its crew members generally unarmed. But high-interest boardings now being done around the nation are new, with Coast Guard crews wearing sidearms.



Boardings like this one, 4.5 miles east of Galveston, are designed to stop a terrorist from targeting ships and petrochemical facilities along the 50-mile Houston Ship Channel and four busy nearby ports. Authorities study a ship's previous ports of call and her crew's backgrounds in deciding to conduct a high-interest boarding.

The level of security differs on the boardings, depending on the potential for trouble, with some missions including FBI, Immigration and Naturalization Service and U.S. Customs agents. On this day the Coast Guard alone boards the ship, checking logbooks, cargo manifests and the passports of 18 crew members, who come from the Philippines and parts of Europe.

Like all the others so far in the Houston-Galveston area, this boarding took place without incident, but Day and others can't predict when, where or how another attack might come.

"You don't know if it's going to happen in our port," said Bafia, 28, of Galveston.

"We are no more capable of stopping every incident, protecting against every eventuality at the port than we are any other location," Harris County Judge Robert Eckels said.

"If someone wants to be on the (San Antonio) River Walk with a bomb in a suitcase and set it off in a restaurant or on Sixth Street in Austin or in Houston in the new downtown entertainment district, it's impossible to totally protect any of those areas just like it's impossible to totally protect all the refineries and transportation facilities in and around the port."

A day last week spent with Coast Guard crews working the gulf and the Houston Ship Channel brings that point home.

On their rough ride to Chemtrans Christian, the Coast Guard crew of 10 passes a crude oil tanker, a chemical tanker, a barge, a container ship, an offshore supply vessel and two shrimp boats.

Each day, 400 ships, tugs and barges enter the Port of Houston, the nation's No. 2 facility in tonnage, said Capt. Kevin Cook, who oversees 300 Coast Guardsmen based in three Houston-Galveston offices. Just under 7,000 oceangoing deep-sea vessels and 100,000 barges ply the ship channel's waters each year, and Houston typically ranks first in foreign tonnage among U.S. ports — annually handling 175 million tons of cargo.

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There are 120 refineries and petrochemical plants along the ship channel and in the industrial-chemical area of the city, said Wade Battles, managing director of the Port of Houston Authority. Grain elevators, steel manufacturers and three small shipyards that build barges, tugs and smaller vessels are part of the complex, as are plants that create such products as petroleum coke, asphalt, chemical fertilizers, herbicides and plastics.

Half the nation's petrochemical products and 25 percent of its gasoline are produced at refineries within a 175-mile radius of the city, said David McCollum of the Greater Houston Partnership.

Some of the biggest plants are here, too. Exxon Mobil's largest refinery in America sits on the ship channel in Baytown, east of Houston. Across an adjacent channel is Shell Oil's largest U.S. refinery.

"It is a bomb waiting to explode," said retired Army Col. David Hackworth, a syndicated columnist, who warned that if an attack rocks Houston's industrial area "we all better get our bicycles out because that's America's main gas station."

Even a slight production drop could spark sharp fuel price increases in the Midwest and East Coast, where three pipelines deliver much of both regions' gasoline, said R. Preston McAfee, the Murray S. Johnson Chair in Economics at the University of Texas in Austin. A supply disruption of only 5 percent could increase pump prices by 25 cents to 50 cents a gallon, he said.

The Brookings Institution's Michael O'Hanlon worries less about an attack on Houston's refineries, in part because it would take more than one bomb to affect the economy. He did echo McAfee's concern about an attack on pipelines.

The vulnerability of the U.S. oil delivery system was illustrated earlier this month when a man fired a bullet into the trans-Alaska pipeline, causing it to spew 285,600 gallons of oil. It was the biggest oil spill in the pipeline's 24-year history and it was forced to shut down.

In protecting the petrochemical industry, the Coast Guard has help.

Battles, of the Port of Houston Authority, said his agency's 50-member police force works 12-hour shifts, increasing its manpower by one third. Refining companies have bolstered internal plant security, and crews that once had access to plants and terminals after coming to port no longer are allowed to leave their ships.

The Coast Guard works with local, state and federal law enforcement authorities, uses remote cameras posted at key points along the ship channel to spot trouble, and now requires ships to forward their crew lists 96 hours before arriving in port. It called in part-time sailors during the past month.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Paul Keough, 39, and dozens of other Coast Guard

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reservists have been called away from their regular jobs as America works to bolster homeland defense.

As Ron Dearmin guides a small powerboat past rusting warehouses and refineries fronting the ship channel, Keough watches for the little things.

After scaling a ladder on a pier, he talks with a tanker worker, asking if someone is serving on roving deck patrol. Later, Keough, a 21-year veteran of the Dallas Police Department, takes note of a tankerman in blue coveralls walking on a barge.

His absence would be a sign of trouble because the tankerman is required to be there.

"Sometimes it's the most inconspicuous things that you pass by that someone might capitalize on," Keough said.

Keough and Dearmin have sacrificed to be here.

The Coast Guard call-up soon will cost Keough two-thirds of his \$66,000-a-year salary. Dearmin, an officer with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Fisheries Enforcement, had to leave his wife, Mary, and seven children back home in Carriere, Miss.

He's missed birthday parties for daughters Sarah, 14, and Anna, 18, this past week, and he will be far from home when the family marks Thanksgiving.

"When I go to work every day I'm just the same. I'm not anxious or concerned — I have my life in order," said Dearmin, 53, a Marine Corps veteran of Vietnam.

"I wouldn't want to not be around to see my boys grow up, but I know where I'm going. For me, God is my shield, and because of that I can be confident no matter what."

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Express-News: Military

For some, wartime is *the* time to marry

By Michelle Koidin

San Antonio Express-News

Web Posted : 10/22/2001 12:00 AM

From his temporary post in Florida, Chris Simpson called the apartment he shares with his girlfriend back home in San Antonio.

"We love each other," he told Patricia Rojas the night of Sept. 11. "So we need to go make this official."

Less than a month later, the two staff sergeants assigned to Lackland AFB stood near a "Star Wars" poster in the cramped office of County Court-at-Law No. 2 Judge H. Paul Canales. With baby white roses in her hair, Rojas swore her devotion to Simpson, and he swore his to her.

"You just never know, because we're both active (duty)," said Rojas, 28, a training leader at the Defense Language Institute. Her betrothed is a 29-year-old instructor in nuclear, chemical and biological warfare for basic military training.

With their vows, Rojas and Simpson joined a wave of couples rushing to the altar — rather, courthouse — since the terrorist attacks. "After it happened, we decided this was what we were going to do," Rojas said.

The number of couples applying for marriage licenses has remained stable so far in San Antonio but has shot up in parts of the country where large deployments have begun.

In Norfolk, Va., home to the dispatched USS Theodore Roosevelt, about 80 couples applied for marriage licenses the week after the attacks compared with 25 to 30 in an average week, said deputy court clerk Dorothy Braxton. In the Shreveport, La., area, home to departed B-52 bombers, weddings surged about 25 percent, said Cindy Johnston, chief deputy court clerk.

Military chaplains and cultural observers don't expect to see a World War II-type marriage boom, however.

For one thing, many military chaplains today require six weeks to three months of premarital counseling before they will unite a couple. For another, today's war on terrorism differs greatly from World War II.

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"At that time, we were on full-war mobility and every other guy was leaving to go overseas," said David Popenoe, professor of sociology and co-director of the National Marriage Project at Rutgers University. "Today we're just talking about a limited number of reservists who have been called up."

Nevertheless, there seems to be a renewed interest in and emphasis on marriage and family life among Americans in general, Popenoe said.

"Tragedy has a way of making people more aware that human relationships are really what is so important in life," he said. "I wouldn't be surprised if there were some increase in the marriage rate, and it could also affect the divorce rate. I think it would be a little harder for a person to divorce right now, just psychologically."

Soaring divorce rates over the years have prompted many military chaplains to begin insisting on premarital counseling. Demands vary based on denomination and individual chaplains; the military itself has no requirements.

"The fact that marriages are more frequently ending kind of raises our level of focus on preparing them before they're married," said Lt. Cmdr. Mark Hendricks, a chaplain in the Navy's Chief of Chaplains office in Arlington, Va.

A few airmen at Lackland who phoned the chaplain's office in the wake of the attacks were told of the counseling requirements and never called back.

"If people are interested in getting married tomorrow or next weekend, there's no way I'm going to do that," said Capt. Leslie Janovec, a Methodist chaplain at Lackland.

There could be exceptions, though. Janovec said there are always special circumstances. "I would probably look at it very carefully and weigh very carefully what the circumstances are," she said.

One Marine Corps chaplain in Southern California made such an exception for an engaged Texas couple, officiating at their seaside wedding after the young corporal got deployment orders to the Middle East and his bride drove 22 hours from Arlington.

In Janovec's premarital counseling sessions, couples learn about communication skills and discuss the meaning of marriage. "Often those issues we talk about in that setting are issues people haven't thought about that could be obstacles later in their marriage," she said.

Other societal changes also make a modern marriage boom less likely, chaplains say.

Col. L. Alan Brown, chaplain at Fort Sam Houston, said today's Army is smaller and already includes more married people than in the past.

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And back in the days of World War II, servicemen were sent off for years at a time, unlike the three- to six-month deployments common today.

Views on morality have changed, too. "There was a different sexual ethic in the 1940s," said Rabbi Ira Flax, a chaplain at Lackland. "There is a freer attitude today than there was in our parents' or grandparents' generation, which limited intimate relations or kept them on a more serious or committed level."

Flax expects to see rushed ceremonies only by couples who already had marriage plans.

"People who are already on the books to get married and feel the pinch of an impending deployment might move it up two weeks or six weeks," he said.

Rojas and Simpson decided not to wait for that kind of news.

Sept. 11 was enough for them.

"It made us even closer," Simpson said, "because it made you not take things for granted."

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Vets at SBC back today's troops

By JOHN WHISLER

EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITER

Professional golfer Larry Nelson wasn't surprised that the ground war had begun in Afghanistan. Nor was he surprised at the support from U.S. leaders and the American public here at home.

He only wishes the soldiers who put their lives on the line in Vietnam several decades ago could have received the same.

Nelson served a 90-day tour in Vietnam in 1968 after being drafted into the U.S. Army at age 20.

"I'm much more confident sending troops into Afghanistan because of the people sending them in," said Nelson, 54, who won the SBC Championship golf tournament Sunday at The Dominion Country Club.

"There were a lot of bad decisions made during Vietnam and after it. I don't think the president is going to leave anyone who goes into Afghanistan in a bad position the way we were in Vietnam."

Nelson is one of several Vietnam veterans on the Senior PGA Tour.

Ed Dougherty, 53, another Senior Tour golfer who played in the SBC Championship this week, was drafted into the Army at 19 and served one full

year in Vietnam in an infantry and mortars division.

He said the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 hit him pretty hard.

"Basically, it made me sick to my stomach, like every other American," he said. "All those people were just there, at their jobs. They basically were assassinated."

"But I'm proud of the way our president is handling this whole thing. I just hope everyone in America stands behind our troops. We didn't always get that."

Dougherty said his company was overrun by the Viet Cong on May 12, 1968. He was one of only 45 men out of 113 that day who survived.

"I was just lucky, that's all,"

he said. "Nothing more, nothing less."

Walter Morgan, 60, another tour pro, served two tours of duty in Vietnam, 1966-67 and again in 1970-71.

He said he worries for U.S. ground troops who are being pressed into action in Afghanistan. He said the attacks stirred deep patriotic feelings, but unlike other veterans who said they'd volunteer for duty if asked, Morgan said he'd politely decline.

"I've done mine," he said. "I hope they leave me alone. But whatever we do over there, I just hope we don't leave our men in too long."

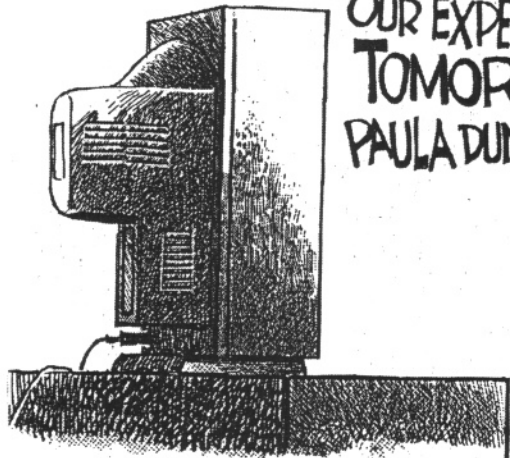
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ANTHRAX! HOW MANY MORE VICTIMS? HOW HORRIBLE IS IT? DO YOU CHoke, BLEED OR GO BLIND? OUR EXPERTS WITH SOME ANSWERS! TOMORROW, ON THE MORNING SHOW, PAULA DUNKLE EXAMINES THE QUESTION NOBODY WANTS TO ASK: WILL A SPORE JUMP OUT OF THE MAIL AND CLOG YOUR NOSE?



PAULA DUNKLE

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Education coming by mail

Postal Service sending postcards on anthrax risk

BY SONJA GARZA
EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITER

In a wary atmosphere where people look for powder in envelopes and a late-night talk show host jokes that the most frightening phrase is "You've got mail," the U.S. Postal Service is launching a nationwide effort to educate the public on the subject.

Beginning next week, every household in America, every post office box and all military addresses will receive a postcard with information on what to do if someone suspects that a letter or package contains a harmful biological agent.

The postcard comes after a series of anthrax exposures at places from national news out-

lets to Capitol Hill.

The postcard will include information about what should trigger suspicion about a piece of mail, such as lopsided or lumpy packages, or ones marked "personal" or "confidential."

Also included are tips on what to do with a suspicious item.

"Don't shake it, bump it, or sniff it," the card reads.

Much of the information mirrors advice already disseminated through the media.

"It's public education more than anything else," Austin Postal Inspector Marcia Colliver said.

"So far, the majority of the population probably doesn't have anything to be overly con-

cerned about.

"They need to be vigilant, but they don't need to be alarmed," she said.

Colliver said it is "very, very rare" for the Postal Service to mail out a nationwide notice, but it has happened before.

A couple of years ago, each American household received an alert on telemarketing fraud.

Colliver hopes the latest postcard will have a calming effect on the public.

"(If) you don't know what to do, you become more alarmed and panicky than you need to be," she said. "For the most part, the mail is really safe to handle."

sgarza@express-news.net

Postcard alert

Beginning next week, every household in America will receive a postcard from the U.S. Postal Service with the following information:



**A MESSAGE FROM
THE POSTMASTER GENERAL**

The U. S. Postal Service places the highest priority on the safety of our customers and employees and on the security of the mail.

Please see the other side of this card for information about safety and mail handling. We want you to know we are doing everything possible to make sure the mail is safe, and we need your help. Your security and peace of mind are paramount to us.

John E. Potter



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What should make me suspect a piece of mail?

- It's unexpected or from someone you don't know.
- It's addressed to someone no longer at your address.
- It's handwritten and has no return address or bears one that you can't confirm is legitimate.
- It's lopsided or lumpy in appearance.
- It's sealed with excessive amounts of tape.
- It's marked with restrictive endorsements such as 'Personal' or 'Confidential.'
- It has excessive postage.

What should I do with a suspicious piece of mail?

- Don't handle a letter or package that you suspect is contaminated.
- Don't shake it, bump it, or sniff it.
- Put the mail piece in a plastic bag.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- Notify local law enforcement authorities.



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Time to cross the street and leave anthrax paranoia behind



CARY
CLACK

It's one of the riskiest things that people do each day, an activity fraught with danger. Still, millions of Americans determined to move forward will take the necessary precautions before they risk their lives by — crossing the street.

Throughout the nation, in preparing for this possibly deadly task, people will stand on street corners, wait for the light to change, look both ways and then cross, thinking little of the perilous trek they just made or of the success of their short journeys.

The mundane task of crossing the street can be seen as a metaphor of daily living: the potential for danger is there but it shouldn't prevent us from doing what we need to do and want to do.

Yet if we lived our lives the way some people have succumbed to the hysteria over anthrax, we'd be too paralyzed by fear and doubt to ever cross the street.

We're living in a strange and difficult time, shadowed in the fears cast by Sept. 11.

The threat of bioterrorism has thickened the shadows and dusted them with the anthrax sent to media outlets and government offices.

Say this about Osama bin Laden and his ilk, curse their demented souls, at least they're driven by a purpose, albeit that of a murderous hatred.

Not so for the cretin hoaxers who think it's hilarious to play on these fears by sending substances masquerading as anthrax to their fellow citizens. If caught and over

18 years old, part of their punishment should be consumption of a daily "Not Really Anthrax Milk Shake" of coffee creamer and laundry detergent and the like.

But hoaxers aside, most of the "reports" of anthrax sightings are false alarms and present-day myths fueled by overactive imaginations.

Despite all of the evacuations of businesses and schools, there hasn't been one confirmed case of anthrax reported in Texas since Sept. 11. It's one thing to be cautious, quite another to be frightened by any powdery or sticky white substance.

Yet false reports are so prevalent an Anthrax Watch, Get a Grip Hot Line may need to be established.

("Sir, calm down. I understand that this is the first time your wife left you to baby-sit your 3-month-old

son and that this is the first time you've had to change his diaper. But believe me when I tell you that the white powder in the container that says baby powder is actually baby powder. Please don't put Cipro into his baby formula.")

Beyond the toll in human life they extract, the worst thing that terrorists do is make people so jittery that they no longer trust each other, their surroundings or even their own judgment.

They weaken the trust we need to live.

From the day we're born, our lives are in the hands of other people, and not just the doctors who bring us into this world and the families who raise us. We depend upon the kindness and decency of strangers.

We live our lives trusting that others will heed their humanity and honor our right to live. We cross streets trusting that drivers will stop at red lights. We eat in restaurants trusting that those who prepare our food won't poison us.

And while it's true that we may no longer listen to the roar of an airplane or gaze at tall buildings in the same way because that trust has been horribly violated, it's also true that we can't allow our lives to be consumed by fear.

Yes, we must be cautious and look both ways. But ultimately, we have to cross the streets of our fears to go where we want to go.

To leave a message for Cary Clack, call (210) 250-3546 or e-mail at cclack@express-news.net



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THIS OUTBREAK MAY BE
HARDER TO CONTAIN.

THE SACRAMENTO BEE REX BABIN



Nacho Guarache

by Leo Garza



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Man arrested for hoax

KAREN GLEASON

Staff Writer

A Del Rio man found out the hard way Wednesday that "bioterrorism" hoaxes are no laughing matter to local law enforcement.

"We will absolutely not tolerate this type of behavior," said Val Verde County Sheriff A. D'Wayne Jernigan during a press conference Wednesday night.

Speaking to half a dozen members of the local media, Jernigan said deputies from his office and area firefighters converged on a trucking and customs warehouse on Frontera Road about 1:30 p.m. Wednesday after an employee at the business called 911.

Jernigan said another employee at the business had opened a Federal Express envelope, sprinkled a type of commercial floor cleaner inside and resealed the envelope with tape.

"When another employee was going through the mail, the substance fell out onto his lap, apparently through a hole in the corner of the envelope," Jernigan said. The sheriff said the man's co-workers became upset and frightened, although the man eventually told them it was a joke.

"The rest of the employees apparently didn't think it was much of a joke at all," the sheriff added. They promptly called 911.

Jernigan said his deputies responded, as did firefighters with Del Rio Fire and Rescue and the Val Verde County Rural Volunteer Fire Department.

By the time emergency personnel arrived at the business, the man who had put the floor cleaner in the envelope had fled briefly to Mexico, but "we put a lookout for him at the port, and he was detained later in the afternoon," Jernigan said.

Taken into custody by Lt. James Sunderland and Sgt. James McGonagill, the two sheriff's officers investigating the case, was Jesus Eduardo Urbano, 35, a Mexican national who has permanent resident alien status, Jernigan said.

Jernigan said Urbano would be charged with making a false alarm or report, a state jail felony, and with making a terroristic threat, a third degree felony.

On Thursday morning, McGonagill said Urbano will only be charged with felony terroristic threat, because deputies could not obtain a warrant to arrest him on the false report charge.

"We will simply not tolerate this type of hoax in Val Verde County," the sheriff said. "I have conferred with the district attorney and our district attorney has agreed to prosecute these cases to the fullest extent of the law," Jernigan said.

That the man had picked the wrong time to hoax a suspicious envelope went without saying. Earlier in the day, both Del Rio post offices were cordoned off and the persons inside briefly quarantined after employees at the Bedell Avenue Post Office found a white powder under a mail pallet.

On the East Coast, "bioterror" panic hit a new high as the U.S. House of Representatives closed its doors and ended its business for the week after nearly 30 employees in Sen. Tom Daschle's office tested positive for exposure to anthrax. The governor of New York is on an antibiotic regimen after he tested positive for exposure to the bacterium as well.

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Jernigan said the sheriff's office has received its share of calls as well. "We have received several calls from citizens concerned about substances they've found. They have all checked out to be readily identifiable harmless substances, but we are taking the concerns of citizens very seriously, especially during these times," Jernigan said.

Jernigan said the envelope incident at the warehouse Wednesday afternoon had nothing to do with the closures of the post offices earlier in the day. He said the substance found at the Bedell Post Office has been sent to San Antonio by the Federal Bureau of Investigation for testing.

Jernigan said the substance that fell out of the envelope at the warehouse Thursday afternoon will not be tested, as it was identified as a white, gritty powder used in a commercial floor cleaner to sprinkle on spills.

Jernigan said although his deputies carry latex gloves and hospital masks for protection, he admitted no agency in the city or county has the equipment to deal with hazardous materials, biological or otherwise.

"We take great comfort in the fact that we have Laughlin Air Force Base very close to us and that they have agreed to respond and assist us. Laughlin is simply better equipped than the rest of us," the sheriff said.

He added no one has the expertise to identify every biological hazard. "That would be an impossible feat," Jernigan said. "But that is one reason we are cautioning everyone to simply be aware and alert."

Jernigan again urged the community not to panic.

"I believe that our community is safe. I truly believe we are adequately protected by our federal, state and local governments. The city, especially, has done an excellent job of stepping up to the plate in assuring the security and safety of the community," he said.



URBANO

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City calls press conference in response to 'anthrax' scare

ALEJANDRA VALDEZ

Staff Writer

Mayor Dora G. Alcala surrounded herself with city leaders as she held a press conference in City Chambers Wednesday afternoon to address incidents that had occurred that morning at the Bedell post office.

Del Rio Fire and Rescue Chief Harold Bean, Val Verde County Sheriff D'Wayne Jernigan, Del Rio Police Chief Manuel Herrera, U.S. Post Office Master Wes Nance, City Manager Rafael Castillo and City Attorney Martha Sepeda accompanied the mayor for the press conference.

"It is important to keep the public informed because of the incident," began the mayor as she spoke of the white powder found in the Bedell Post Office warehouse as mail was being taken out of pallets to be placed in mail bags. The incident left the post office closed for the day as authorities, from local to federal, stepped in to take samples and quarantine

the workers in case of possible exposure to anthrax and closed off all access to the office. A sample of the powder from the site was taken to Val Verde Regional Medical Center.

Alcala explained the Emergency Management Team, a team of officials and agencies in the area ready to respond to emergencies such as the flood of 1998, the terroristic events of Sept. 11 and the anthrax scare at the post office had met just the day before. Alcala translated into Spanish what was said at the press conference, relaxing her manner somewhat and becoming more informal.

"We do have a plan and we have worked in contact with other agencies. Yesterday, we had an anthrax-topic meeting. We have had a couple of incidents since Friday and a major incident just a few moments ago," said Alcala.

"We have had calls from people who suspect incidents and these are naturally reported to the authorities," she continued. Bean discussed three

separate events in a short manner to keep a scare from developing. "Let's start with Friday..." Bean explained there was a letter picked up and bagged on Friday and another on Monday. That one was taken to the fire department and was bagged and sent to the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation). Bean later said one letter "was from New York and the other I'd rather not say..."

"The incident this morning, the workers were removing mail from the pallet to mail bags when the powder was found. We will take all concerns very seriously," Bean said the Hazardous Material Response Team from Laughlin Air Force Base took samples. One sample was taken to VVRMC. "Preliminary reports show no bio, no spores of any kind, but not 100 percent sure until tomorrow, 24 hours. We don't want the public panicking. These guidelines have been followed," assured Bean.

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An explanation was then given that only serious incidents and mail will be looked into. If it is serious, the public is asked to place questionable material in three ziplock bags and have the package ready for Del Rio Fire and Rescue to collect and send to the FBI.

The public was assured, "if there is something, we will let the media know. Don't pass rumors, 'I heard this, I heard that.' Let me reiterate over and over, if it is true, we will let the public know," said Bean.

The mayor, in her translation, added that if the situation had happened before Sept. 11, the powder would have been swept away without a second thought.

Alcala also said, "We have the experts. LAFB is the experts in checking the powder and having it sent to the lab. We are 99 percent sure it is not anthrax or anything, but we want to be 100 percent sure." Nance said the post office would remain closed until Thursday, but carriers had been sent out with the mail they felt they could deliver. The mail not delivered would be out on Thursday. Nance assured the media that "probably none at all (powder) went out with the mail." The incident at the Bedell Post Office was called in at 9:15 a.m. and involved a multitude of organizations, both on the scene as well as off-scene.

Bean named the DRPD, DRFR, Department of Public Safety, EMS, Texas Department of Health, LAFB, FBI and Border Patrol as some of the agencies involved.

Alcala said, "Just like on Sept. 11, the first call I got was from Laughlin Commander Col. Rick Rosborg.

Col. Rosborg said, 'We have dispatched HAZMAT. We are here to assist you'. That gives a real good feeling of security. They are well equipped and well trained. We are very fortunate to have them so close. It is an advantage and a great help to have them so close."

Attorney General John Ashcroft, meanwhile, pledged to prosecute to the "fullest extent of the law" all cases of hoaxes involving anthrax or other biomedical threats.

When asked if there would be any charges to the actors of this hoax, the mayor said there would be an investigation, but there would be none if nothing was found.

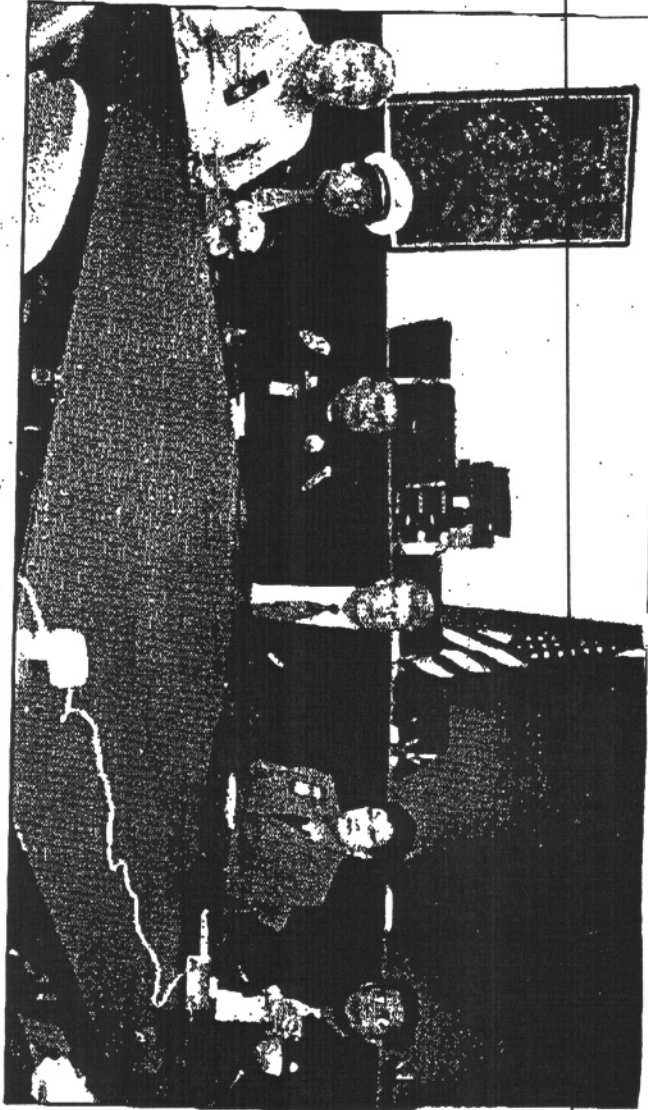
"Personally, I feel the FBI would be in charge." She did not direct her panel of law enforcement leaders to take the question.

Different answers were muttered but none was agreed upon.

After the conference, Jernigan said the public is asked to have an "overabundance of caution. If the incident is done deliberately, with the purpose or intent, then it does carry charges."

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News-Herald photo by Alejandra Valdez
A press conference held at city chambers Wednesday afternoon included a panel of city leaders. Pictured are, from left) Val Verde Sheriff D'Wayne Jernigan, Del Rio Fire and Rescue Chief Harold Bean, Del Rio Police Chief Manuel Herrera, U.S. Postmaster Wes Nance, Mayor Dora G. Alcalá and City Manager Rafael Castillo.

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Veterans Day ceremonies

Laughlin Air Force Base and all vets organizations are preparing to have Veterans Day ceremonies Nov. 11, starting with a parade at 2 p.m. beginning at Star Park and finishing at the Civic Center.

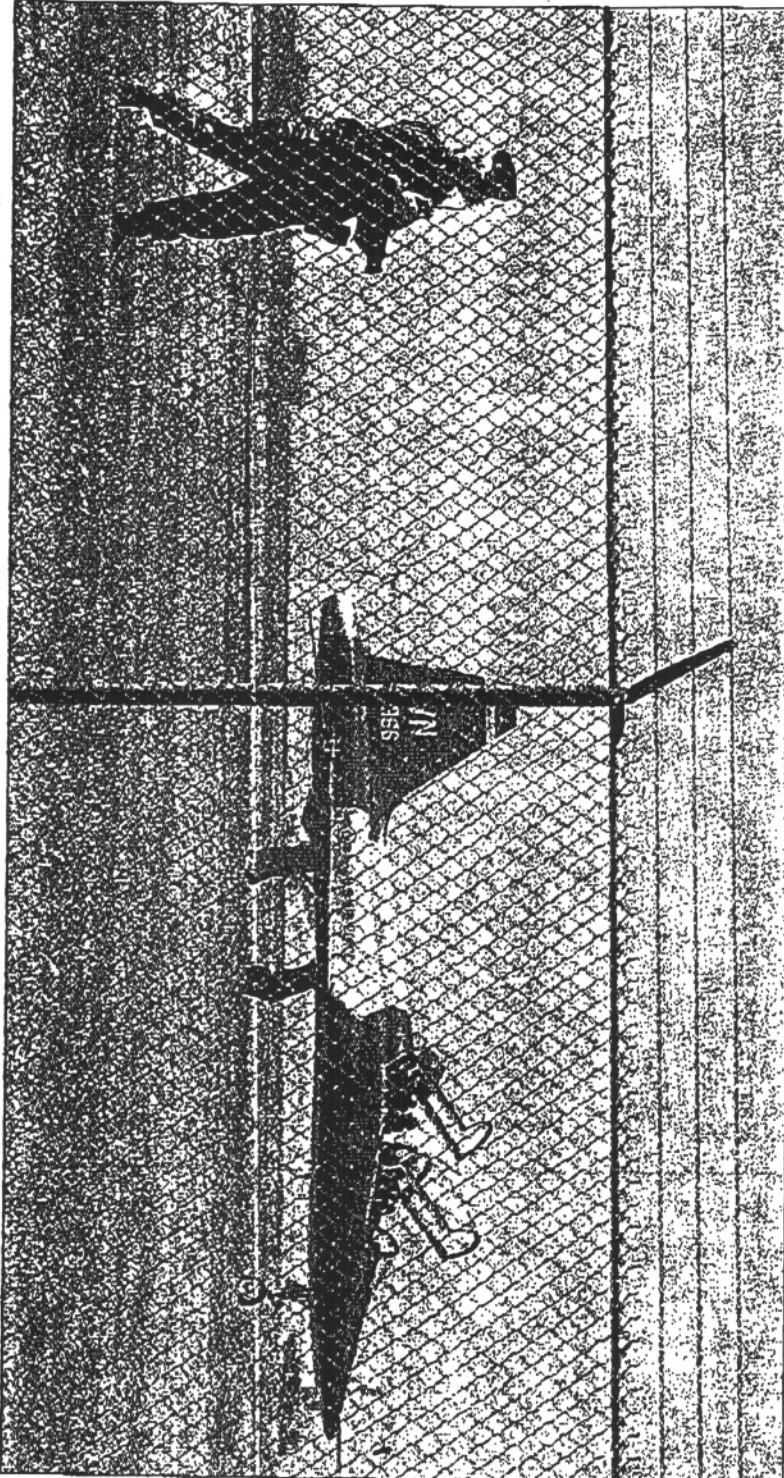
Ceremonies will begin at 3 p.m. in front of the Civic Center, near the vets monument paying homage to Del Rio and Val Verde veterans.

The ceremony will begin with a T-38 fly-over from LAFB.

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FOOT SOLDIER



An Air Force security officer patrols the perimeter of Vance Air Force Base Wednesday afternoon as a T-38 rolls down the taxiway for a training flight. Security at Vance has been heightened since the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C., to include armed foot patrol. (Staff Photo by CHRIS LANDSBERGER)

New members share spirit of honor guard

MOMAMMAD A. FARUQUI
THE NEWS HERALD

M-1 rifles that were standard issue in the 1940s and 1950s have spent the last 50 years in the white-gloved hands of military honor guards at Tyndall Air Force Base.

Three new honor guards will soon get the chance to handle the ceremonial rifles — although they will have a little newer version. The three are the latest graduates of Tyndall's honor guard preparation course.

"They asked for volunteers and I volunteered," Senior Airman Joel Welch said at the graduation ceremony Thursday. "We've learned a lot about military history and military tradition" during the 40-hour training program,

he said.

He said showing respect to those who have fallen before, and to the American flag, are parts of what it means to be an honor guard.

Senior Airman Gina Gary, who has been in the Air Force 5½ years, was an honor guard at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., for a year — the standard tour.

"I missed the discipline and I missed looking sharp," she said of the reason she wanted to be a guard at Tyndall, too.

One of the duties that Welch, Gary and Airman 1st Class Kevin Crawford will perform is 21-gun salutes at funerals, although they will have relatively newer M-14 rifles.

"The Tyndall honor guard has been performing since 1959, in addition to their full-time duties as administrators,

crew chiefs and air-traffic controllers," Brig. Gen. William Hodgkins said. "They selflessly perform an average of five events per week, often traveling hundreds of miles.

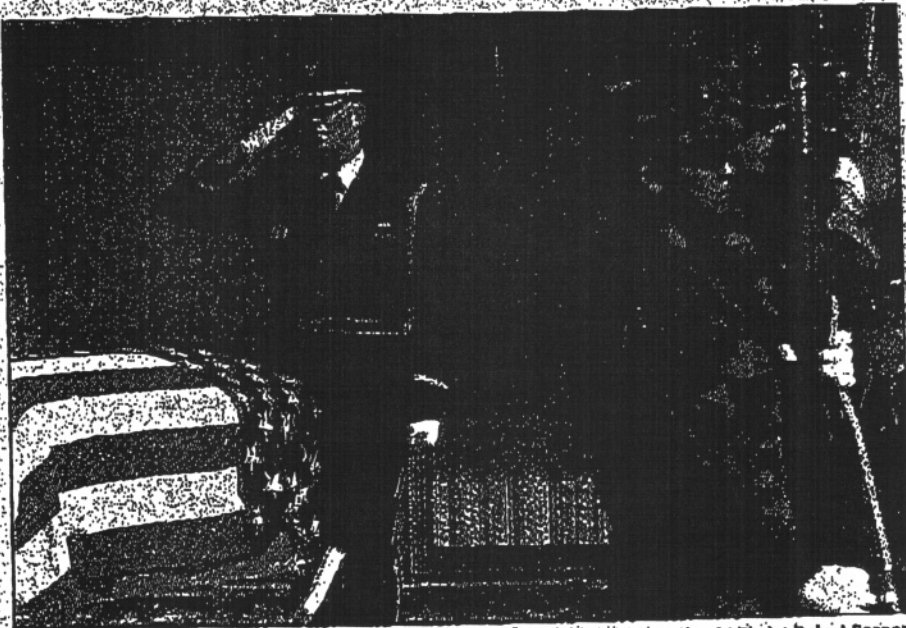
"Yet they sometimes find the time to practice (their presentation) and maintain their equipment."

Hodgkins also recognized Jerry Rose, one of the first members of Tyndall's honor guard.

"Sgt. Mike Duval had organized the first precision drill team at our base when we started," Rose said. "It used to be that we just got a few people from various squadrons" when an honor guard was needed.

He said there were only 15 honor-

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News Herald Photo: Robert Cooper

Lt. Tom Oziemblowsky salutes the flag during a demonstration by the Tyndall AFB Honor Guard.

GUARD

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guard members in 1959, compared with more than 40 today.

Rose said he served in the honor guard for three years. Not much has changed except for a few "movements," he said.

He joked that being an honor guard member had its perks.

"You didn't have to do detail work or kitchen work," Rose said.

"You didn't have to peel potatoes if you were in the honor guard."

■ The writer can be contacted at mfaruqui@pcnh.com

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